

This is a resource for teachers and creative facilitators developed by Nia Morais, Bardd Plant Cymru. She introduces methods to support and encourage learners to respond creatively to art.



# What is Celf ar y Cyd?

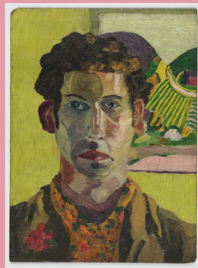


Celf ar y Cyd is part of the National Contemporary Art Gallery of Wales and provides access to Wales' national art collection by maintaining a digital archive of art held by the museum. This is a valuable resource that can be used to spark discussions about art and creativity in the classroom.

The website contains thousands of individual pieces, as well as collections on the following themes:



Nature & Environment



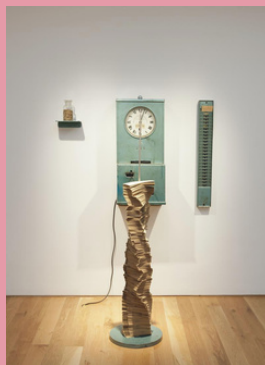
People, Society & Identity



Our World



Health & Wellbeing



Politics, Protest & Activism



Wales & Wellness



Religion & Beliefs



The Body



Click on each artwork for more information about each theme.

## Classroom resources

These ekphrastic poetry resources are suitable for Progression Step 4 and are designed to use art as a springboard to create poetry in the classroom.



Ekphrastic

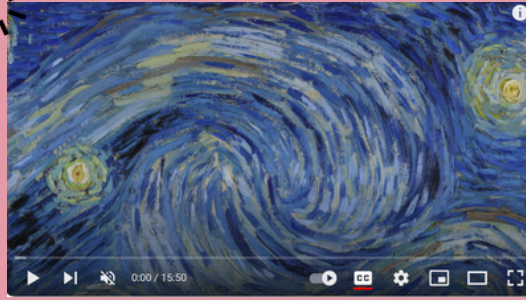


Ekphrasis is a Greek word meaning to describe something in detail; the term "ekphrastic poetry" means poetry that describes (or is inspired by) a piece of art. The poet responds to the piece describing what can be seen, but also discusses the themes or message of the artwork, as well as their personal and emotional response to the work.

A video of a student explaining her experience with writing ekphrastic poetry:

# Lesson 1 - Introduction

The Starry Night by Vincent Van Gough.



A 15-minute video explaining the history of The Starry Night.

## Prompt questions

- What are your impressions of this painting?
- How does the artwork make you feel?
- How do you think Van Gough manages to create so much movement in a static piece of art?

Share the following responses to The Starry Night with the class.



'Vincent' by Don McLean. The song uses The Starry Night as inspiration to discuss the artist's life and the importance of support for people suffering from poor mental health.

## Class discussion

- Other than the stimulus artwork, are there any similarities between the song and the poem?
- Which themes or ideas are evident in both pieces?
- Can you spot any poetic techniques? Consider imagery, alliteration, repetition etc.

The Starry Night by Anne Sexton

The town does not exist  
except where one black-haired tree slips  
up like a drowned woman into the hot sky.  
The town is silent. The night boils with eleven stars.  
Oh starry starry night! This is how  
I want to die.

It moves. They are all alive.  
Even the moon bulges in its orange irons  
to push children, like a god, from its eye.  
The old unseen serpent swallows up the stars.  
Oh starry starry night! This is how  
I want to die:


into that rushing beast of the night,  
sucked up by that great dragon, to split  
from my life with no flag,  
no belly,  
no cry.

In this ekphrastic poem, Sexton explores the speaker's emotional response to Van Gogh's painting.

## Task 1

Ask students to choose one of the following artworks from the Celf ar y Cyd collection:



Click on each artwork for more information. 

### Prompt questions

- What draws your attention first?
- What objects/colours stand out?
- Think of three adjectives to describe the piece.

Students should try to answer these questions without prior knowledge of the artwork. This task supports exploration and analysis – it is their interpretation that matters. For Year 7 and Year 8, you could encourage your students to become 'art detectives'. Perhaps ask the children to explain the reasoning behind their answers – Why do you think that? What in the artwork shows you that?

After answering these questions, read (or let the students read) the information about the artwork available on the website. This would provide an opportunity to discuss if their guesses are correct, and if the additional information changes their interpretation of the piece.

## Lesson 2 - Writing Ekphrastic Poetry

### Task 1

#### Free writing

- Create a list of everything you see in your chosen painting – colours, objects, people, shapes, animals, plants, etc.
- Create a list of adjectives to describe the artwork.
- Select 3 objects from the list and write a simile about each. For example "The moon is as yellow as a banana".
- Now try to extend these similes to make them more interesting. You can do this using a memory or a story: "The moon is as yellow as a banana in my lunchbox, like the sun outside the museum on a summertime school trip."
- Write a paragraph describing what happens in the piece. Try to use detailed and colourful descriptions, similes, and adjectives. For example "The moon shines golden on the black land, and the wind rushes past like a train..."

## Task 2

### Haiku

Haiku is a Japanese poetic form. It is a short poem of 3 lines that follows a certain pattern of syllables. These poems were traditionally inspired by nature, but poets now use the form in order to write poems on any theme. Writing haiku is a short, fun task that encourages students to be discerning with their choices of words and sounds.



Return to your chosen painting from the Celf ar y Cyd collection and read over your responses to the free writing task. Use your notes to produce a Haiku using one of the following structures:

Line 1: First impression of the piece (5 syllables)

Line 2: Choose one detail as if looking through a microscope and describe it (7 syllables)

Line 3: Describe the emotion of the piece (5 syllables)

1. Location (5 syllables)

2. Time of day and season (7 syllables)

3. Response of the viewer (5 syllables)

1. Describe what is happening in the artwork (5 syllables)

2. Describe one object using adjectives (7 syllables)

3. Simile using the adjectives from line 2 (5 syllables)

To help count the syllables, students should underline each syllable, or clap the syllables and count them before writing the finished poem.

### Student examples

#### Extension tasks

For a more artistic element to the lesson, students could make their own version of the chosen artwork.

In addition to writing a haiku, students could write acrostic poems, englyn, diamond poems, etc. Enjoy!

A twilit mountain  
Watching one man's loneliness:  
Silence of the world.

– Yr.8 students of Ysgol Gyfun Bryn Tawe,  
inspired by The Bard by Thomas Jones.



Midday in springtime  
Water flows through the village  
Like a slimy snake.

– Junior students of Ysgol Bro Morgannwg,  
inspired by Sully, near Cardiff by Thomas  
Frederick Worrall.

